The Dark Time

Shadow Hawk

It is the time of the Long Night, and I have laid my thick mantle upon the ground. The branches are bare, the water hardens, and life slows to a crawl.

Those that could have long since fled south to the warmth of my brother, Fire, and the lands of the Sun, while I walk the Earth that lays Submissive at my feet.

My breath runs hot, and my eyes are cold. Death is in the air, and the Moon reflects red off of my Horns.

Glistening like diamonds, the stars fill the night sky, and the wind howls like a lonesome wolf, and I feel the pulse of Her that fills my veins with heady wine. I lift my muzzle to the sky, and bugle my challenge loud and far. Who will meet my challenge? Who will Dance the Dance of Life with the Lord of Death? My hooves ring like steel against the stone beneath the snow, sparks lighting up the night, and the sounds of my movement shakes the slumbering trees.

From the forest, a soft glow appears. A woman old, and wrapped warmly against the wind approaches. Frail she seems, but there is fire in her eye. "I will dance the Dance" she says. Her legs begin to shuffle and sway, while I watch, intrigued by the woman, and I begin to answer her motion with movement of my own. And the Dance unfolded.

Round the forest we whirled, and the wrinkles slipped away from her. Younger she became, as veil after veil fell away, taking the years with them. The Stars danced above in silent awe, while the Moon flooded us with cold light.

Faster and faster the dance went and our eyes grew wild with the thunder of the pulse of the dance, and our feet drummed the dance, hooves and horn, laughter and the slapping of feet pounded out the beat. And the steam rose from our bodies.

The Earth herself split open from the Dance, and I led her down, down into the depths of the Earth, and she shed her veils along the way, twirling and swirling, and the Dance moved on. At last, I stood in the place of my Power, and the Throne of Death stood silently waiting.

"Milady, will you stay here at the Throne of Death with me and dance the Eternal Dance, for I am struck by your beauty and would have you for my Companion".

"No, for I love you not", was the reply.

Looking at the Radiant Woman who stood in front of me, I said, "Milady, you have Danced the Dance of Life with me as none has Danced before, what Boon may I grant you?"

With stars in her eyes, she replied, "I want the spirit of my Son returned to Life. I want to know the secrets of Death."

"None has asked such a boon, how dare you so much?" I asked.

"The Earth needs my Son to live. They must have the light and joy of Spring, the Heat of Summer, and the Harvest of Fall to survive. They need my Son. The Dance must go on" she softly spoke.

"Then kneel, and learn the Secrets of Death", I answered.

And I taught her, with pain and scourge, with laughter and love, with youth and age and darkness I taught her. I showed her the heights and the depths, and at last, I taught her the peace of the Slumber of the Dead.

Laying my Lady down in the Earth, she would sleep, and dream of Spring, and of the Dance, and the Seed in her belly would swell and bring life to a new world. And she and the child would Dance, and Sing, and grow old, and the child, lover, king will die. Once again, as the Circle goes round, she will come to me in the Woods, and we shall Dance the Dance of Life once more.

But for now, it is quiet and dark, and the Moon is bright, and the wind howls, and I walk the world alone.

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